

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, June 10. 1707.

I know it is expected, I should say something to the Substance of the last Paper, viz. That the Union cannot be broken— And what do you mean by that now, says one, if the Parliament had pass'd the Drawback Bill, had not the Union been broken? Did it not strike at the Life and Soul of the Treaty, and directly infringe the fourth Article about a free Intercourse of Trade?

This is an ensnaring Question, and I know very well the Design of the Enquirers, if possible, to draw this Paper into the Scandal of pleading for the Encroachments, some Men wish to be made upon the Union, after it has so long been pleading for the Benefits of the Union.

Well, Gentlemen, however I will speak my Mind frankly, I am perswaded, I shall offend no honest unbias'd Person, I am sure

no such ought to be offended at it, and I am sure what I shall say, is not only congruous to Truth and Justice, but to all that I have ever said, or ever thought, or design'd to say upon the Union; and to that Fairness, Integrity, and Uniformity of Practice and Principle, which every honest Man aims at, and which I hope I shall ever preserve in spight of Calumny, Censure, and ill Treatment of any Sort:

I have laid it down as a general Thesis, that no Act of Parliament, however contravening the Treaty, or inconsistent with it, could have broke the Union— I have but one Explanation to add to that Head, viz. To lay down what I mean, by *breaking* the Union, and I'll be short enough in that; By breaking, I mean dissolving it, breaking it up, disengaging the Nations from the Obligations of it, and making it lawful for them

them to return to their respective former Constitutions ; and tho' this seems not immediately to be meant in the present Clamours, yet I begin there, because I know perhaps more of the Drift and Design of some People in these things, than is known every where, and hear more than every Body hears, of what Use is made of these things in the Argument by the Enemies of the Union.

I think it proper therefore to anticipate the wicked Design, by making it evident, that the Treaty is established on too sure a Foundation for any Power yet formed on Earth to dissolve or destroy ; and as this is very necessary to set right the Judgments of a great many, who are amus'd at the Clamours and Arguments of those, that are every Moment railing Scruples ; so those, who are better inform'd, ought to bear with what instructs others, tho' it be useless to themselves.

But what is to be said to the Drawback Bill ?

In general I must say, 'tis very hard for English Britain, that it should not pass, and 'twould have been very hard for Scots Britain, if it had, I mean without Amendments ; and I heartily wish, some Medium had been found out.

I have already explain'd myself as to the Wine and Brandy, that I think, the Clamour rais'd by the Merchants has had a great Deal of Management in it — And that very Clamour has really been more Damage to Trade, than the Subject could give Reason for ; my Meaning is this, that had all the Wine and Brandy, imported upon this Occasion into Scotland, been sent directly into England without Noise and Distraction, it had not been sufficient to have made any Fall of Prices, or Stop of Trade, and consequently the Evil might have been born with ; but 'tis the Clamour, the Noise, and the Artifice made Use of without Doors, has done the Damage to Trade, and the Union is no way concern'd in that.

But after all, I do not say, nor ever did I say, it was no Injury to England, GOD forbid I should either be so partial, or so unjust, and I'll state the just Distinction as short as I can.

I always said, it was a Hardship upon England, both upon the QUEEN as to Her Revenue, and upon the fair trading Merchant, and in that it was which I applauded, and justly too, the Honour and Generosity of the QUEEN and House of Lords in rejecting the Bill, rather choosing to bear the Inconvenience, than make our Northern Brethren uneasy.

But this did no way argue, that it was no Damage to England, no nor that it was not a very grievous Burthen, and when I say, bear it, as I would full say, if I were to proceed to Particulars, I think it does not at all argue, but they were in the right, who endeavour'd to find out a Medium, that is, redress the Mischief, and yet not wound the Union — Whether the Medium propos'd was sufficient or no, is none of my Business to determine.

Had the House of Commons pass'd an Act universally to stop the Importation from Scotland, without Distinction or Reserve, for the Subjects of Scotland, I cannot help saying it had been in my Opinion a Convention of the 4th Article of the Union, tho' far from dissolving it as before ; and 'tis a doubt with me, whether it had been a legal Act, whether it could have pass'd, or had it been pass'd, could have been obligatory to Britain ; but that I leave undetermined.

But that England had a great Deal of Reason, if possible and with Safety to the Union, it could be done, to prevent the intollerable Frauds practis'd upon her, under the Shelter of the Union ; I can by no means doubt, and I think 'tis very necessary to enter into the Particulars of those Frauds, that all the World may determine, whether there is reason for this Matter or not, and the right distinguishing on this Head would shorten our Dispute, and bring us to some better Understanding among our selves.

I believe, no Man in the Prospect of the Treaty ever expected or desir'd, that taking Advantage of a casual Interval between the End of one Constitution and the Beginning of another, Strangers, for such the English were as well as the Dutch in the Case before us, should come in with their Stocks, and with their Tricks too, to evade the Law, defraud the

the English Government, and invade the Course of Trade.

I'll do Scotland that Justice, they had no View of it, nor took any Steps towards it, nor do they now approve of it, or in general are Gainers by it.

That the Advance upon their own Goods might be in their View, is no Cheque to our Argument; it was to be expected, it was their Due, and it would never have been disputed them, and it was both foreseen and not disputed: But that the whole Chain of Mischiefs which have follow'd, should be practised, and the Cheats of Trade sheltered under the Wings of the Treaty: I assure you, Gentlemen, as it was never foreseen, so it was not intended by the Scots; nor are they at all pleas'd with the Attempt to make them the Tools of so notorious a Fraud, or at all accessory to it, or will be at all concern'd at any lawful restraint to be put upon it.

The Out-cry therefore, which is politickly rais'd, that the Stop of French Wines, Brandys, &c. from Scotland will encroach upon the Union, is as politickly carry'd on, 'tis thrown upon the Scots without any Ground, and they will at any time make it appear they are clear of it; for give them but the free Liberty of their own Properties, and the uninterrupted Intercourse of Trade according to the 4th Article, I dare say upon all Occasions, they will renounce the having any hand in the sheltering the Frauds and clandestine Trade of other People, and also clear themselves of having any hand in them.

Nor do I speak this by Suggestion barely, but as I am daily conversant with the People I am speaking of, and have it directly from their own Mouths; I hear them every day detesting the Frauds put upon the Government, under the Shadow and Protection of the Union, they are every Day protesting they are clear, so much as of any Design to have the Treaty so improved, to the Damage of the Publick, and the Loss of the fair Traders; and they think themselves injur'd, (1.) in being slandered, with being the Contrivers and Abettors of such unfair, unjust and dishonest a Use, as is made of that Advantage by others, the

Blame of which by common Fame seems to lie at their Door, whereas generally speaking they have no Hand in it. (2.) They are injur'd in having the general Trade of Britain, of which they are now Sharers, and for which they are equally concern'd, injur'd by clandestine unfair Trading. (3.) To have the End and original Design of the free Intercourse of Trade capitulated for in the Union, and mention'd in the 4th Article of the Treaty, debauc'd from its true Original, viz. The Encouragement of Scots Men in improving, encreating and advancing Commerce, and their Nation by it, into a Cover and Shelter for some of the worst Frauds that can be committed in Trade.

Upon the whole therefore I am clear in this; give the Subjects of North Britain a free Communication, a free Intercourse of Trade, to the Ports, &c. of South Britain; and in this Particular of the new Import of French Goods, declare all their Goods, truly and bona Fide, their own, and that have paid legal Customs, free to be imported, and whatever legal Restraints are put upon others, the Scots will immediately declare themselves unconcern'd, and very well pleased, since they never design'd the Union to be a Shelter to Fraud, under the Colour of their Advantage.

I do not know, who I please or who I displease in this, nor do I know, who in England are or have been for and against, and the Subject will clear me, I doubt not of being byass'd by any Interest, Favour or Party—— I speak freely my own Observations, and I do it, that these things being set in a clear Light, we may not ever be quarrelling one at another for our different Notions of the thing.

I think, I am oblig'd to clear Scotland or Scotch Britain from acting in or defending the Frauds which we complain of, and I think nothing can more readily do it, than by showing, which in all my Acquaintance among them is general, that they disown any hand in it, and reserving a Liberty of their own Properties, will be very well pleas'd to see England have Justice in the rest.

I acknowledge, that this Paper insisting so much upon Frauds and Cheats put upon